

Nature's Supermarket

Code: EL1 and MID and HIG: LS, SS

The Nez Perce were at home in their own backyard. The trail lead them into buffalo country, but it also led them to areas where they would go on what is called seasonal rounds for collecting roots and berries and medicines. Everything available today in the Supermarket down the street was available back then in Nature's Supermarket. Using the recipes below, you too can make and sample some dishes that are similar to those made by Indians 200 years ago. (Note: Some of the ingredients have been modified for easier preparation).

"What's For Dinner?"

Pemmican

How about some pemmican? Pemmican was a traditional Indian food made with dried meat, berries, and seeds mixed with fat or bears grease. It was often eaten in the winter when fresh foods were scarce. Here is what you will need to make pemmican.

Ingredients

- 1 Cup of hulled sunflower seeds
- 1 Cup of beef jerky (cut into small pieces)
- 1 Cup of raisins or currants

Directions

1. Blend all ingredients together in a food processor. Store in an airtight container.
2. Before serving, discuss with students how Nez Perce people made pemmican from dried buffalo, camas roots, chokecherries, and roasted white pine nut seeds that were ground together using grinding stones (pestles and mortars).
3. Before serving, go over all substituted ingredients with the class to make sure no one has a food allergy or is confused about what the Nez Perce really used. When serving, place a teaspoon of the pemmican in each student's napkin/plate to taste and enjoy.

Fry Bread

Traditionally, Nez Perce Indians like many Indian Tribes ground seeds, roots or corn into a flour that was mixed with water or milk and cooked or fried in buffalo fat. This is a very popular Indian food today. It is made and sold throughout the country. You can cover fry bread with a variety of toppings including powdered sugar, honey, butter, peanut butter, apple butter, hot chili, or salsa, jam or jellies. Some people just like them plain.

Ingredients

1 1/2 to 2 Cups warm water or milk
3 Cups all-purpose flour
1/2 Teaspoon salt
1 Tablespoon baking powder
2 Cups vegetable oil for frying

Utensils

Bowl
Rolling Pin (optional)
Frying Pan (either electric or on a stove top)
Paper Towels
Fork

Directions

Mix the dry ingredients together in a bowl. Add the milk or water. Dust your hands with flour to keep them from getting sticky. Knead the dough until it's stretchy, but not sticky. Pull off a clump the size of a plum and roll it into a ball with your hands.

Pat the dough ball between your hands until it's flat. Then begin gently pulling the dough to stretch it out until it's shaped like a thin, flat pancake. This takes a bit of practice. If you can't get yours stretched, lay it on a surface dusted with flour and roll it flat with a rolling pin.

You can also punch a hole through the center with your thumb. Some say this will help the bread to cook evenly.

Ask an adult to fry the bread in a few inches of hot cooking oil. When one side turns a light brown color, turn it over with a fork and cook the other side.

Steamed Clover

Many Indians, including the Nez Perce, would steam clover by laying wet clover between sacks of hot stones. It was tasty and nutritious. You can try gathering some Big Head Clover or you can buy fresh spinach and cook it instead. Beet tops, collards, mustard greens, or turnip greens are a fine substitute, too.

Wash the leaves and put a handful in a small pot. Add 1/4 cup water. Cover with a lid and simmer about 5 minutes.

Warning: Ask your parents or an adult to be sure your yard has not been sprayed with chemicals if you gather the clover from there.

Fruit Leather

Indian people picked and ate various kinds of wild berries: strawberries, huckleberries, wild grapes, cranberries, chokecherries, wild blackberries, serviceberries and many more. They learned what berry plants looked like, where to find them each year, and when in season.

Berries were carried home in baskets and eaten fresh, but many were dried and saved for the winter.

You can make a dried fruit snack for yourself using fresh or frozen berries.

Ingredients

2 Cups of ripe fruit (berries, cherries, plums, apricots, peaches, apples, or a mixture of these)

Utensils

Table knife

Blender

Cookie sheet

Plastic wrap

Wooden spoon

Directions

Wash the fruit and let it drain. Cut it into small chunks. Leave the peels-they are chewy and nutritious. Put the fruit in the blender and blend for 15 seconds. Pour the mixture out onto a cookie sheet lined with plastic wrap. Let it dry in a warm place for a day or so.

To eat peel the fruit off the plastic wrap. You can roll it up in the plastic wrap and keep it in a covered container to store.

Berry Soup

In the early 1800s, Native Americans would have made berry soup in an animal-skin pouch using hot rocks to keep it warm.

Ingredients

4 cups of fresh or frozen blackberries, blueberries, serviceberries or huckleberries

1/2 Cup of honey

1/4 Cup cornstarch

Directions

Place the berries in a large pot and cover with water. Boil for five minutes and then simmer.

Stir the honey and cornstarch into the hot berries. Cook the soup for a few minutes until it thickens.

Pour into bowls and serve with frybread.

Drinks

Thirsty children usually drank icy cold water from mountain streams or rivers. They also had special drinks made from a variety of trees and plants that was served as teas. Maple syrup or honey was used to mix with water to make a punch or to simply serve as a sweetener.

Leaves were used to flavor drinks, too. The dried leaves of snowberry, wintergreen, and spruce and twigs of raspberry, chokecherry, and wild cherry were tied and dropped into boiling water to make a tea. Flowers were dried and added to tea, too. One flower that was used was the Wild Rose or Wood Rose.

Wild mint or wild ginger leaves were gathered and used to flavor teas and punch.

You can make a punch like the Indian children enjoyed. Pour a glass of fruit juice add a fresh mint leaf. Stir and enjoy!

Depending on plants. Many times an Indian medicine man would fix a tea out of crushed mint leaves in water. Try it yourself; it's tasty! Staying Alive. Maple syrup was also used as was honey to sweeten medicines made from bitter plants, so the children would drink them. Just like some medicines today.